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SOCIALISM

AT ST. STEPHEN'S

IN 1883.

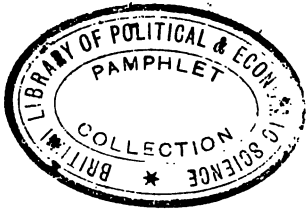
*Work done during the Session by the Parliamentary
Committee of the*

LIBERTY & PROPERTY DEFENCE LEAGUE.

PUBLISHED AT THE CENTRAL OFFICES OF THE LEAGUE,
4, WESTMINSTER CHAMBERS, LONDON, S.W.

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Self-Help versus State-Help.

LIBERTY & PROPERTY DEFENCE LEAGUE.

For resisting Overlegislation, for maintaining Freedom of Contract, and for advocating Individualism as opposed to Socialism, entirely irrespective of Party Politics.

CENTRAL OFFICES:—4, WESTMINSTER CHAMBERS,
VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.

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THE League opposes all attempts to introduce the State as competitor or regulator into the various departments of social activity and industry, which would otherwise be spontaneously and adequately conducted by private enterprise.

Questions of the structure or constitution of the State and those of foreign policy do not come within the scope of the League. It is exclusively concerned with the internal functions or duties of the State.

During the last 15 years all interests in the country have successively suffered at the hands of the State an increasing loss of their self-government. These apparently disconnected invasions of individual freedom of action by the central authority are in reality so many instances of a general movement towards State-Socialism, the deadening effect of which on all branches of industry the working classes will be the first to feel.

Each interest conducting its self-defence without any reference to the others has, on every occasion, hitherto failed to oppose successfully the full force of this movement concentrated

in turn against itself by the permanent officials and the government in power for the time being.

The League resists every particular case of this common evil by securing the co-operation of all persons individually opposed to the principle of State-Socialism in all or *any one* of its instances, and by focussing into a system of mutual defence the forces of the "Defence Associations" and "Protection Societies" of the various interests of the country.

As regards such protection societies, companies, and corporate bodies, this co-operation is effected without any interference with the independent action of each body on matters specially affecting its own interest.

Each society passes a resolution formally placing itself in correspondence with the League. The League in return supplies every such society with information concerning each fresh symptom of State interference; it places the various societies and interests in communication with one another with a view to their mutual assistance inside and outside parliament; and, at the same time, it combines for the common end the forces of the several societies and interests with those of the League itself and its members in both Houses of Parliament.

The chairman (or his nominee) of every society, company or corporate body thus in correspondence with the League is an *ex-officio* member of the Council of the League, and receives notice to attend all its meetings. The corporate action of the League in every case of overlegislation where any interest is affected is regulated by the decision of the ordinary members of Council, acting in conjunction with its *ex-officio* members.

Persons wishing to join the League are requested to send their subscription (voluntary from five shillings upwards) and address to Messrs. Herries, Farquhar & Co., Bankers, 16, St. James's Street, S.W. Particulars and Publications of the League, can be had from the Secretary, W. C. Crofts, at the Central Offices.

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STATE SOCIALISM.

THE following account of the work done by the League, in connection with current legislation during the first Parliamentary Session since it came into existence, shows two things. In the first place, it proves that the League in stating that it was formed "for resisting Overlegislation, for maintaining Freedom of Contract, and for advocating Individualism as opposed to Socialism, entirely irrespective of party politics," was not proposing to do battle with the empty air. It is an error to suppose that, because Socialism on this side the Channel does not advertise itself by descending into the streets, it has no existence here. Between its continental counterpart and the Socialism of this country the difference of aims and methods is characteristic. The genuine Socialism of England is not to be confounded with the counterfeit exotic introduced from abroad, and which has never really taken root-hold here. It does not flaunt its creed before the world nor does it occupy itself with breathing out threats of confiscation and violence. It shows its indigenous character by proceeding in thoroughly English fashion to attain what it wants by Acts of Parliament passed in accordance with constitutional forms. Because on this account it escapes general recognition, and is itself ignorant of its own tendency, English Socialism is in effect far more formidable than the showier continental type. During the last fifteen years there has been a large increase of measures whose common characteristic is the substitution of the State as regulator or competitor in those various departments of social activity, which would otherwise be normally and adequately worked by private agency. The Report on the Bills of the Session published in April last under the title "Overlegislation in 1883" by this Committee showed that quite one-third of the forthcoming legislation was of this character. It is not

only that with growing frequency the functions of the State have been thus extended beyond the limits necessary for the maintenance of order and security and the enforcement of civil contracts. This invasion by the central authority of the field best left to individual initiative has also been annually marked by increasing strictness and minuteness of application in the resulting measures of interference. This movement is not directed by any band of reckless revolutionists. At the present day in England we are well on the high road that leads straight to State-Socialism, and our guides are the accredited representatives of the country in Parliament.

The League has undertaken the advocacy of Individualism as opposed to State-Socialism from no desire to defend the liberty of the unit to the detriment of the common good. The confinement of national industrial life within uniform limitations marked out by a system of State-Socialism, can have no other effect than to arrest the development of the race by destroying the originality of the individual. The lines on which current legislation is proceeding inevitably lead to a condition of things in which all classes of society must equally suffer, the immediate producers of wealth no less than the originators and directors of the processes of its production. Somewhere between the two opposite poles of Individualism and Socialism will tend to be ultimately made the compromise that will approximately fix what are the proper limits of the rights and duties of the State. About what point this will be, experiment and experience alone can show. Arguments, general and special, demonstrating that Socialism lacks motive power, and contains within itself the seeds of its own decay, but which this is not the place to advance, seem to indicate that this point will finally be found a long way on the Individualistic side of the division between the two extremes. On this account, and because the present set of legislation is strongly towards the opposite extreme, the League, in no spirit of doctrinaire self-confidence, has taken upon itself the

duty on every occasion of making out the best case possible for Individualism. State-Socialism, as it is now developing here, **has** no lack of advocates. In order to avoid the dangers of a one-sided political growth, it is necessary that the cause of Individualism should be equally well and consistently defended. Every fresh curtailment of private liberty, or substitution of collective for individual action in the assumed interest of the community, is a step in the direction of State-Socialism. With the proposers of each such change rests the burden of proving its expediency. This proof it is the function of the League to demand in each case. At the same time, also, that it adduces in every instance all possible argument for leaving the area of individual liberty intact, it will in many instances advocate its extension beyond the limits now imposed by the community.

The one hopeful sign in connection with English State-Socialism is its unconsciousness. The stage of industrialism to which this country has attained far in advance of others, either ancient or modern, is the result of the free play of individual activities. Many generations have been consumed in this work, and it is reasonable to conclude that by this time the constitutional tendency of the English people is towards Individualism. If this is so, a recognition of whither one division of modern legislation is tending must be followed by a reaction in the opposite direction from State-Socialism. It is hoped that by Reports like the one issued last April by this Committee, and like the one submitted now, as well as by its general action, the League may assist in hastening on this recognition.

Each one of the various interests of the country classed under the several headings of this Report have at intervals during recent years been in turn subjected to interference at the hands of the central authorities. On every such occasion the interest affected has acted as if it thought that it was singled out as a special victim for some exceptional application of State regulation. A resistance conducted independently, without any reference to other branches of industry, has in each case been followed by a

further loss of the rights of self-government. The second effect of this Report will be to show the error of this line of defence. A survey of the measures here treated of will make it clear that these successive encroachments on the freedom of action of each particular interest are identical in character and have a common origin. These apparently unconnected invasions upon the liberties of private enterprise are but so many instances of the general advance of State-Socialism all along the line. The detached resistance offered by its several victims cannot arrest the progress of the common enemy. The attack upon each must be recognised as an attack upon all alike, and must be met by common action on common ground. Each of the interests possesses its own Protection Society or Defence Association. The mode of co-operation adopted by the League does not in any way interfere with the independence of these bodies in matters specially affecting themselves only. The League confines itself to co-ordinating the existing forces of these several associations into a single system for mutual defence and interchange of assistance.

In thus combining to oppose a solid front to State-Socialism, the directors of industry in this country will also be fighting the battle of those they employ. The deadening effect of State-Socialism upon industrial development cannot long remain undetected even by the working classes themselves. When this discovery is made, the objects of gratitude will not be those who have purchased cheap popularity by promising to cure by Acts of Parliament the evils of an inevitable struggle for existence. Those who, on principle, have by word and deed all along consistently resisted this fatal delusion will then have the confidence of the country.

In November, 1882, a parliamentary committee to watch all legislation in which the League might be expected to take action, was appointed, consisting of the Earl of Wemyss (Chairman), Lord Bramwell, Mr. H. C. Stephens, and Mr. Wordsworth Donisthorpe, to which, on its re-election after the Annual General

Meeting in June last, the name of the Earl of Pembroke was added. During the past Session the greater part of the League's business has devolved on this committee.

All the Public and many of the Private Bills coming before Parliament were examined, and a report upon those that seemed to be wholly or in part objectionable was drawn up and published in April last by the committee under the title "Overlegislation in 1883." In addition to the copies distributed amongst the Press and in other quarters, one was sent to each member of both Houses of Parliament. Accompanying those forwarded to the members of the League in the House of Commons was enclosed a general "whip," urging such opposition to the progress through the House of the Bills referred to in the Report as in each instance might seem politic and possible.

In addition to this, the committee has taken special action in the case of some of the Public and Private Bills reported upon, with the following effect :—

RAILWAYS.

Railways (Continuous Brakes) Bill. [House of Lords]. After communication with some of the leading railway authorities as to the desirability of opposing this Bill in the House of Lords, a "whip" to the following effect was drawn up :—"The Bill will in effect give power to the Board of Trade to enforce its own type of continuous brake on all railway companies. In view of the steady development of brake power on the railways of the country under a voluntary system, there does not seem to be any reason for giving greater powers of regulation in the matter to the Board of Trade than it possesses already. It is obvious that one tendency of the Bill will be to create a monopoly in the hands of one or two makers of brakes of the officially approved pattern." This was sent to all members of the League in the House of Lords, with the request that they would resist the measure when it came on for second reading. This took place on July 13th, when the Bill on being opposed was withdrawn.

Railway Passenger Duty, etc., Bill. [House of Commons]. The real object of this Bill was more correctly stated by the short title, the "Cheap Trains Act, 1883;" and it is by this title since its passing that it is referred to in the Board of Trade notices. Stated in general terms, the Act enables the Board of Trade to sell justice for a valuable consideration. The essence of the Act is contained in Section 3, which relates to "provision for proper third-class accommodation and workmen's trains." By this section a reduction in passenger duty (the total abolition of which has more than once been promised by Parliament as soon as the state of the revenue should justify the sacrifice) is made conditional upon railway companies providing cheap suburban trains in accordance with orders framed at the discretion of the Board of Trade, and at such rates as it may choose to fix. It is obvious that this is a power capable of great abuse, and that it may prove a most dangerous instrument in the hands of a government, and may very possibly lead to a great deal of corruption among officials. It gives the Board of Trade a very large control over the railway traffic—a power which in certain cases may be used for purchasing the popular vote by socialistic concessions in the shape of fares lower than it will pay the railway companies to work for.

On these grounds, and because it embodied the unconstitutional principle that taxation which had been virtually remitted by Parliament might be re-imposed by the head of an irresponsible department, Clause 3 of the Bill during its passage through the House was opposed by Sir Edward Watkin and other members.

[House of Lords.] Acting upon a communication received from Lord Brabourne, the committee recommended that Lord Brabourne's motion for the excision of Clause 3 on the third reading in the House of Lords should be supported.

The third reading took place on August 9th, when the chairman of the parliamentary committee and other members of the League voted for Lord Brabourne's motion, but were unsuccessful in carrying it.

Metropolitan Board of Works (District Railway) Bill. *London Commissioners of Sewers (Ventilation of Railways) Bill.* [House of Commons]. In answer to a communication from the Railway Passengers' Protection Society, asking the committee to support that society in its opposition to the compulsory removal of the District Railway ventilators as proposed by the above Bills, the committee replied that the question of either the maintenance or the removal of the ventilators was one beyond the province of the League. They decided, however, to support in both Houses of Parliament the claims of the railway company to complete compensation, not only for the erection and removal of the ventilators, but for the withdrawal of the valuable privilege previously granted by Parliament; and to urge that the cost of such compensation should fall not upon the ratepayers of the metropolis but upon the Imperial Treasury. It was resolved, as being the most effective course, to introduce amendments to this effect in the two Bills when they appeared in the House of Lords.

[House of Lords.] As showing the feeling of a large portion of the working classes of the metropolis on the question, a petition, at the request of the committee, was presented by Lord Brabourne to the House of Lords from 218 pawnbrokers carrying on business in London and the suburbs. In it they say:—"Your petitioners, in the exercise of their business, are continually brought into very intimate relations with large numbers of the wage-receiving classes who form the great bulk of the travellers by the Underground Railway. From the knowledge your petitioners thus have of the views of workmen as to the need for increased rather than diminished ventilation on this line, they are of opinion that no change should be made in the ventilation of the railway until some more efficient method shall have been prepared. Your petitioners humbly submit that that which Parliament has granted, it cannot justly take away without such full compensation out of the Public Treasury as would be granted to any private owner whose property it might be needful for the State to appropriate."

The chairman of the parliamentary committee at the instance of the London Trades Council, on July 26th, in the House of Lords, moved :—"That in view of the fact that many millions of the working classes of London are compelled habitually to travel on the Metropolitan District Railway, and that their health and convenience is greatly dependent upon the improved means of ventilation recently provided by the railway company under powers granted by Parliament after full inquiry before committees of both Houses, it be an instruction to the committee to whom the said Bills are referred to allow the attendance before them and take the evidence of the representatives of the London Trades Council and such other associated bodies as the committee may desire, in order that the case of the working men may be fully heard, provided a petition from such council or other associated bodies be presented to the House." On the following day it was announced in the House of Lords that an arrangement had been made to enable the London Trades Council to be heard before the Select Committee. The District Railway Company, in consequence of the amendments secured before the Select Committee, having withdrawn their opposition to the Bills, the committee did not consider it necessary to proceed any further in their resistance to the measures.

SHIPS.

Threatened Shipping Legislation.—(See "Overlegislation in 1883," page 9). The following circular letter in reference to the answer of the President of the Board of Trade to the deputation from the Chamber of Shipping, that waited upon him in March last, was drawn up and sent to the General Shipowners' Society, and to some 900 members of the chief shipping firms in London, Liverpool, and the other large ports of the country :—

"The Board of Trade, in the person of its President, has now fairly thrown off the mask. In his reply to the deputation from the Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom, he pre-faced his remarks with the assurance that they should have no

fault to find with him on the score of frank and free speaking. And he kept his word. Such a lecture has seldom, if ever, been read by a Minister of State to a powerful and loyal body of traders. There is no longer any doubt as to the intentions of the Legislature with respect to the shipping interest of this country. 'Are you, gentlemen, going to tell me that these horrible disasters are the act of God, for which no human being is responsible? I do not believe it. While shipowners are insured against all loss under the present Act, they are able to escape all *criminal* liability for the men in their employ who have been drowned, and whose families have been ruined and reduced to misery and destitution. This is a serious state of things, which *cannot be allowed to go on*. And now comes in a point to which I desire particularly to draw your attention; of all these cases of lost ships, no shipowner has been made *amenable to justice*. I desire to point out that with a *view to legislation* on these questions, I urged upon the gentlemen interested that a Shipping Council should be established Liverpool objected to any legislation; the Clyde objected to the proposed council. Another objected to any load-line whatever, and asked the Board to abolish the load-line; while the Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom saw no adequate necessity for any action. No adequate necessity! No adequate necessity, when 3,118 lives were sacrificed last year to preventible causes. . . . Something must be done, for if the public mind is directed to the present state of things, it will not rest satisfied until such changes are made as will enable us to deal with this deplorable state of things. I propose, now, to repeat my suggestion for a Council of Shipping; and I shall have to consider, among other things, how far the shipowner should be made liable to the families of seamen, where the deaths of seamen are shown to be due to the negligence or *otherwise* of the shipowner. Then something must be done with regard to the question of *insurance*, for I hold it to be a discreditable state of things when men may lose life and property and a profit be made out of it. Before I make proposals on these subjects in the House of Commons, I will

again appeal to you for your advice and consent. But do not answer me with a *non possumus*.' Do, if you dare! that is the plain English of this unjustifiable threat. For what is the reasoning on which this threat is founded? This:—'Some of you must be guilty, though none have been convicted!' Would it not be more charitable and more moderate to say, 'Since none of you are shown to have broken the law, the fault I fear is in the law.' Now, neither the members of the shipping interest nor other members of this League would raise a hand to resist this threatened legislation, if they believed, as the President of the Board of Trade affects to believe, that it was likely to result in a saving of life and property. It is because such acts of Government interference have never succeeded and are not calculated to succeed in such endeavours, that resistance is absolutely necessary. The President of the Board of Trade has himself admitted that the result of past similar legislation has been not only a failure, but actually harmful. He says, 'I am sorry to say I must also tell you that interference has not produced the result it was intended to produce in the security of the lives for which you and we are in some degree responsible.' And he proceeds to quote figures which fully bear out this damaging admission. 'I have had the loss of life at sea taken out for the last six years, and I am sorry to say it is an *increasing quantity*. The average from 1877 to 1881 was 368 vessels totally lost, and 1,551 lives per annum. But in this last year, 1882, that number increased, for it was 548 ships and 2,883 lives.' Thus we have an increase of 180 ships totally lost at sea, and of 1,332 lives lost with them—an increase of which there is absolutely no explanation forthcoming except the harassing legislation of recent manufacture. This is a terrible indictment to bring against measures which were undeniably brought in with the best intentions, but unfortunately, we must add, with blind zeal. We are grateful to the President of the Board of Trade for it. And yet what does he in face of this evidence propose to do? To bring in *more measures* of the same kind, and based on the same mischievous principle.

It is not necessary to point out how arbitrary rules, framed by incompetent departments of State, are liable to produce more evils than they can hope to cure. The operation of the measures referred to is well known to the shipping interest, but unfortunately not to the general public, who will in all probability second the efforts of the President of the Board of Trade to add another chapter to the statute-book, which, in point of rigidity and restraint of trade, will surpass all its predecessors. And now that the eyes of shipowners are opened to the true dangers in store for them and for the commerce of the country, what are they likely to do? It is childish to blink the fact that there are members of that body who subordinate the well-being of the trade and the country to considerations of party politics. So long as this is the case, and these men are allowed to sway the counsels of representative bodies of shipowners, it is useless to inveigh against the system of grandmotherly government which is being foisted upon us. Are shipowners going to take up the gauntlet which the President of the Board of Trade has thrown down, or are they not? That is the question. And if so, what are the chances of success? Single-handed, powerful though they undoubtedly are, for reasons just hinted, they must succumb. There remain but two courses open to them. Let them quietly submit to the dictation of the Board of Trade and the ignorant but well-intentioned philanthropists at the back of it; or let them accept the proffered alliance of other interests similarly harassed and similarly threatened. United they will triumph; singly they must fall. The Liberty and Property Defence League is formed for the purpose of resisting all such legislation as that yesterday shadowed forth by the President of the Board of Trade, and it will oppose any measures of the kind; but the effectiveness of its opposition will mainly depend upon the support given to their efforts by the interest for the time being assailed."

Numerous replies have been received, showing the widespread feeling which exists as to the necessity of some such co-operation, and which will doubtless, in view of still more recent

official utterances, at no distant date take a practical shape.

Following upon the circulation of the above letter, and in consequence of the strong resentment aroused among the shipping interest against the invidious way in which they are thus branded as victims for further government interference, the Board of Trade has deemed it prudent to execute a change of front. Since 1821 no less than sixty Acts and Amended Acts, under the head of Merchant Shipping, have been passed; and yet in a memorandum issued by the Board of Trade in November last, that department is at length reluctantly compelled to admit the utter failure of all these attempts. The warning that State tinkering with individual enterprise only aggravates either, directly or indirectly, the inevitable dangers and evils of the commercial struggle for existence is written clear and large in the history of every branch of industry. Nevertheless, the lesson is not even now fully taken to heart by the Board of Trade. In the same memorandum containing this confession of the fruitlessness of a century of experiments, we have the announcement that yet another series is to be commenced. This time the saving of life at sea is to be secured, not by official supervision of the ships themselves, but by the State regulation of the business of marine insurance.

Merchant Shipping (Fishing Boats) Bill. [House of Lords]. The object of this Bill, in general terms, is to place the sea-fishing service of the country, which has hitherto enjoyed especial immunity from official interference and red-tape, under the control of the Board of Trade. In spite of the evidence collected among the fishing population in the autumn of last year by the Sea Fishing Trade Committee, the consensus of which was decidedly adverse to any change in the existing state of things, except on the point of apprenticeships, the Bill was introduced without any warning into the House of Lords in the middle of July. As the Bill was only printed on the day fixed for the second reading, the committee considered that a postponement ought to be obtained in order to allow of those who were most intimately affected by

the measure being consulted. The Bill, however, in spite of objections, was read a second time on July 24th, and though the chairman (the Earl of Wemyss) again took exception in committee to this inconsiderate haste, it was read a third time, and sent down to the House of Commons. Here, again, the Bill was only printed and delivered to members on the day fixed for the second reading. Although Mr. Birkbeck who, together with Mr. Thomas Gray, the assistant-secretary of the Marine Department of the Board of Trade, and three others, formed the Sea Fishing Trade Committee, urged that the fishermen knew nothing whatever about the Bill, and protested against this hurried legislation, it was read a second time on August 20, went through committee on the 21st, and was read a third time and passed on the following day.

The principle of this Act, so far as it has one, seems to be to afford protection to those whose tender age requires it. Whether the common law is sufficient for this purpose or whether it needs to be supplemented by an Act of Parliament is beside the question, because the objection raised by the League to this Act is that for the attainment of this professed object an infinity of regulations are provided which have been justly characterised as "minute, needless, endless, and vexatious." For example, the compulsory examination of skippers and first hands, the compulsory certificates, the compulsory log-book and report, the compulsory Board of Trade form of agreement with seamen, the licenses for seamen's lodging-houses, and the delegation to marine officers of county court and magisterial functions can hardly be regarded as necessary steps in the direction of increased protection to apprentices and deck hands.

Mr. Donisthorpe, who had proceeded to Scarborough shortly after the Bill had passed through the Upper House to make inquiries on behalf of the committee into the views of the fishing population of the Yorkshire coast upon it, reported that absolutely nothing was known about the measure by the fishermen, and that they were unanimous in condemning its provisions when ex-

plained to them. As by that time the Bill had already become law, it was decided that the secretary, accompanied by Mr. M. J. Lyons, should join Mr. Donisthorpe at Scarborough in order to organise a series of meetings along the coast for the purpose of explaining to the fishermen the character of this sudden piece of overlegislation.

A circular was drawn up stating shortly the nature of the Act, signed by Mr. Donisthorpe, as representing the League, and by Mr. George Marshall, an influential smack-owner of Scarborough, who from the outset was strongly opposed to the Act, and who has all along been indefatigable in arousing the attention of his brother fishermen to the subject. Of this circular 2,500 copies were distributed among the fishermen at all the chief ports on the east and south coasts. A preliminary meeting was held in the fishermen's quarter of Scarborough, followed by a public meeting in the Town Hall on September 29th, at which Lord Londesborough presided, and which was attended by the largest number of fishermen ever before gathered together at Scarborough. Mr. Donisthorpe explained the Act at length, and was supported by Mr. Lyons and the secretary, who read a letter condemning the Act from the chairman of the parliamentary committee (the Earl of Wemyss). In spite of the organised disturbance of a knot of landsmen, who tried to make a party question of it, a resolution demanding the suspension of the Act was carried by an overwhelming majority. In answer to a challenge from this same clique the League representatives appeared on the same platform, on the following Friday, to defend the general principles and action of the League. There was again a large attendance of fishermen and of members of the League among the Scarborough trades, and the resolution condemning the League was lost by a majority of two to one, the disturbers of the previous meeting being thus defeated on ground of their own choosing. After holding a meeting at Filey, at which a resolution against the Act was carried without a single dissident, the League representatives, on October 9th, proceeded to Hull. A strike

of the fishermen against the winter fleeting and the "boxing system" had just commenced there. After an interview with the committee of the Hull Trawl Fishermen's Protective Society, in deference to the representations of the fishermen, it was decided not to complicate the existing position by holding any meeting there until the dispute between the fishermen and the smack-owners had terminated.

Accordingly, the representatives of the League proceeded to Grimsby where, after a preliminary meeting at the club-room of the Grimsby Trawl Fishermen's Protective Society, a public meeting largely attended was held on October 13th, at which the secretary of the fishermen's union took the chair. After hearing the explanation of the commissioners and a letter from Lord Bramwell severely criticising the Act, a resolution condemning the measure was carried almost unanimously, the only dissentients being some half-dozen smack-owners and one fisherman.

In order to allay the growing dissatisfaction shown towards the Act by the fishermen, the Board of Trade officials the day but one after convened a meeting at their offices. They were so far unsuccessful in reassuring the fishermen that the next day the Grimsby Trawl Fishermen's Protective Society drew up the following appeal, to be carried by the representatives of the League to all the fishing ports of the east and south coasts :—
" Brother fishermen, our liberties are being trampled under foot. The new Fishing Boats Act will assuredly harass and burden us in the performance of our daily work to an undreamed-of extent as soon as it shall come into operation next January. We, the fishermen of this port, were never properly consulted about its provisions before it became law, and it is only within the last few days that we have been made aware of its baneful restrictions, pains, and penalties. For this enlightenment we are indebted to the Liberty and Property Defence League, whose representatives bring this message from us to you. Welcome them and hearken to them as true friends of the fishermen, and let the warning note roll along our coast from port to port, till our brethren from

Berwick to Penzance are roused to a full sense of their danger, and make their voices heard and their will known at Westminster. Let every fisherman in England who values his freedom do as we have done, and petition Her Majesty to suspend the operation of the Act until our representatives are in a position constitutionally to repeal the same."

From Grimsby the League representatives went to Yarmouth where, on October 19, a public meeting was held in the Town Hall, at which upwards of one thousand fishermen were present. Mr. E. Jex, Common Councillor, and largely interested in the fishing trade in London and Norfolk, took the chair. After hearing the explanation of the Act a unanimous resolution was passed demanding its repeal.

On the following evening another meeting was held in the Public Hall at Lowestoft, Mr. T. Roe-Woods, the Chairman of the Lowestoft Improvement Commissioners, presiding, at which a resolution condemning the Act was carried almost unanimously, the only objectors being three or four smack-owners.

It had originally been intended to proceed to the chief fishing ports in the Channel and on the south coast. Shortly after returning to London, however, the representative of the League heard that a large meeting of the west-country fishermen, roused by the reports of the agitation on the east coast, had been held at Plymouth to denounce the Act, and the Trawling Smack Protection Society of Ramsgate wrote to the secretary saying that they wished to join in the general protest against the measure. From this it was obvious that the flame kindled by the League on the Yorkshire coast was spontaneously spreading south and west. It was, therefore, not considered necessary to visit the south coast, it being deemed sufficient for the League to assist in developing and directing the agitation there and in the west by means of correspondence, circulars and letters to the local press. There is little doubt that this success in awakening the fishing population all along the east and south coasts to the danger that threatens their liberty at the beginning of the new year

has in a large measure been due to the tact with which Mr. Donisthorpe explained and commented upon the Act. At all the meetings the uselessness and absurdity of subjecting the hardy experts of the North Sea to the Brummagem machinery of examinations, certificates and clerkly log-books were exposed ; while Mr. Lyons and the secretary availed themselves of these opportunities to explain the principles of the League, and to show their application to this class of overlegislation of which the Act is but one instance.

In addition to the resolutions passed at the various meetings, eight petitions to the Queen for the suspension of the Act have been forwarded to the secretary of the League from the fishermen at the ports of Scarborough, Filey, Flamborough, Bridlington, Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Ramsgate and Brixham, bearing a very large number of signatures. These petitions have been presented to the Queen by the chairman (the Earl of Wemyss) and Lord Londesborough.

The petitioners say that they "were for the most part left in ignorance of the nature of the proposed legislation, and have only recently and since the passing of the Act been made aware of its contents." They submit "that the system of examinations and certificates of skippers and second hands instituted by this Act is calculated to injure and harass them, and to throw the trade into the hands of others who are not similarly burdened ; that it has not been customary to keep written records of casualties, injury, or punishments on fishing boats, and that it will henceforth be necessary, in very many cases, to take a clerk on board, or to fail to comply with Section 43 of the Act." They further complain of "the needless interference with seamen's lodgings by compelling them to take out licenses, and thereby subjecting them to irritating police surveillance ;" and that the Act in other respects places them "under the direction and at the mercy of Board of Trade officials." The petitioners conclude by respectfully reminding Her Majesty "that they have for many centuries enjoyed that liberty and freedom from Government interference,

which by fostering habits of self-help and self-control have made England the greatest and freest nation in the world." Other petitions to the same effect have been forwarded direct to the Board of Trade from Plymouth and Staithes (Whitby), and another is in process of signature at Grimsby.

The strong condemnation of the Act thus elicited by the League from the fishing population has already taken effect in the desired direction. In order to prevent the Act from becoming completely unworkable, owing to the hostile attitude of the fishermen, the Board of Trade has been compelled to surrender one by one many of its most essential provisions. The recent visits of some of the chief officials of that department to Scarborough, Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Brixham, Plymouth, and other ports, for the purpose of appeasing the fishermen, have in each case ended in further concessions and modifications of the Act being demanded and obtained.

LAND AND HOUSES.

Agricultural Holdings (England) Bill. [House of Lords.] This Bill, following the precedent already set in Ireland, proposed, in place of the present agricultural arrangements voluntarily agreed upon between the owner of the soil and the tenant, to substitute a compulsory scheme of agreement drawn up in accordance with an official pattern. Previous to the second reading of the Bill the chairman (the Earl of Wemyss), with the approval of the committee, drew up the following protest against the Bill, which was published in the form of a letter in the *St. James's Gazette*:—"I am tempted to invite those who with light hearts are about to enter upon the consideration of the details of the Agricultural Holdings Bill to ask themselves, What is its principle? If they do this, and give an honest answer, it can only be that the sole principle of the Bill is compulsion, and that in this, and in this only, it differs in principle from the present Agricultural Holdings Act. Having given this honest answer, I would ask them, as Members of Parliament, representing the

interests of the greatest commercial empire the world has yet seen, to consider what this principle of compulsion as embodied in this measure really means. It means simply this: that, whereas in commerce freedom of contract is the very breath of its nostrils, the soul of its being; and whereas the commercial transactions in land—that is, the bargains between landlord and tenant—are in the aggregate greater than those of any two or three of the other largest British commercial interests; these bargains are not only to be forbidden in the future but broken in the past. This is what the two great parties in the State affirmed when, with grateful hearts and cheerful countenances, they, with delightful unanimity, passed the second reading of the Government Agricultural Holdings Bill. Contracts not in ‘exceptional’ Ireland, but here in law-abiding, free commercial England and Scotland—forbidden in the future and broken in the past! And why? Solely because—disguise the truth as they may under specious phrases, bury it no matter how deep under Agricultural Commissioners’ reports—Liberals and Conservatives have cast principle and sound economic doctrine aside, and are playing a game of ‘grab’ for the farmer’s vote. We have now had some eight or ten years of agricultural depression; can—aye, dare—any one of the Agricultural Commissioners, or any so-called farmer’s friend, honestly say that if during these years every line of this Bill had been in force the agricultural distress would have been less or the land in better heart? Why, if he does, Lincolnshire, which for generations has had by custom what all England is now to have by law, gives the lie to such a statement, for agricultural distress in that favoured county has been as great as in any other. Finally, let me point out to agricultural agitators, whether they be members of Parliament or of farmers’ alliances, that when it is proposed by legislation to place one set of full-grown sane men in a position to enforce in their own favour better bargains than they can make in the ordinary course of commercial business transactions, and when they are to have given to them, compulsorily by law, what

is called their 'unexhausted improvements,' it would be well that the farmer, whose supposed friends are thus agitating and legislating for his nominal good, should ask himself the following questions: 'Of what use would all the manures I have purchased have been to me if there had not been hired hands wherewith to spread them? and, even when so spread, of what use would these manures have been unless the earth had been further larded with the sweat of the labourer, freely expended in the cultivation of the soil? The farmer having, like any other sane full-grown Englishman, made his bargain in his own interest to the best of his ability at the market price, is now, because he has a vote and is numerically a more important factor in party politics than his landlord, to have his bargaining bettered by the State. Let him ask himself how long it will be after the enfranchisement of the labourer before the pecuniary interests of the more numerous wage-paid class will be looked upon as more deserving of the favourable consideration of Parliament—of course on the high ground of public and national well-being—than those of the less numerous rent-paying tenants. For if the tenant is to have compulsory compensation from the landlord, over and above the terms of his bargain and contract, for work he has done for his own benefit—on what principle can the labourer be denied compulsory payment by the farmer, over and above his contract wages for the unexhausted value of his labour? This is a matter, I venture to think, the farmers in their short-sighted self-seeking, would do well to consider before they accept the fatal bribe of compulsory compensation." Four thousand copies of this letter were reprinted in circular form and sent to all the members of both Houses, to all the chief London and provincial papers, to the members of the Central Chamber of Agriculture, the Royal Agricultural Society, the Farmers' Club, the Farmers' Alliance, and to all the principal provincial chambers of agriculture in England and Scotland. A "whip" was forwarded to all members of the League in the Upper House and to some other peers requesting their support to the motion, of which the chair-

man had given notice on the second reading of the Bill.

Petitions against the Bill received by the secretary from the following bodies were presented to the House of Lords by the chairman, viz.:—The Liverpool Land and House Owners' Association, the Manchester and Salford Property Owners' Association, the Bradford Property Owners' Association, and the Parliamentary Committee of the Licensed Victuallers of the United Kingdom. The petitioners began by stating that the Bill now before the House "will deprive those engaged in agriculture, both land-owners and tenants, of the liberty heretofore enjoyed to make such voluntary agreements as may seem to them best;" and they then go on to say, "Your petitioners, though not directly affected by this proposed legislation, cannot help feeling that the principle involved in the Bill is one which, if admitted in the case of agriculture, may be used as a precedent for similar interference in other branches of trade and commerce, Your petitioners respectfully contend that industrial progress depends above all things upon the maintenance of freedom of contract and upon immunity from State interference with private commercial relations. Your petitioners, therefore, humbly submit that in the foremost industrial country of the world an attack upon the great principle of freedom of contract and the substitution of State regulation for private agreement cannot but be regarded by all members of the community with disapprobation and alarm;" and they conclude by praying for the rejection of a measure "which in the largest of commercial transactions—the hiring and letting of land—forbids free contract in the future and breaks it in the past."

On the Bill being brought on for second reading on August 7, Lord Wemyss moved, "That this House, while ready to promote a well-considered measure for the advancement of agriculture and the improvement, so far as possible by legislation, of the relations of landlord and tenant, is not prepared to give its sanction to a Bill which, in agricultural tenancies, forbids free contract in the future and breaks it in the past; thus destroying the foundation upon which alone agriculture, trade and commerce can securely

rest." The speech of Lord Wemyss was supported by one from Lord Bramwell, and though the motion, as was foreseen from the outset, on being pressed to a division was lost, a protest against the introduction of the fatal principle of the Bill into English commercial life—a protest with which, among other members of the League, Lord Grey had in the *Times* more than once expressed his concurrence—was thus formally registered in Parliament and before the country.

Liverpool Improvement Bill. [House of Commons]. (See "Overlegislation in 1883," page 25). In the midst of the 34 sections of this Bill dealing mainly with the construction and management of streets, is one making the city of Liverpool an exception under certain sections of the Lands' Clauses Consolidation Acts. The committee were requested by the Liverpool Land and House Owners' Association shortly after the second reading of this Bill, to assist in opposing sections 2 and 11 of the Bill. The Bill was then waiting for select committee, and as the League had no *locus standi* before it, it was not possible for them to oppose it with so much effect at that stage as it would have been on the second reading. Mr. W. M'C. Torrens, M.P., on behalf of the parliamentary committee of the League, presented a petition from the Liverpool Land and House Owners' Association against these sections; and a copy of the petition along with a "whip" was sent round to all League members in the House to oppose these sections if they emerged from committee. A correspondence passed between the members for Liverpool and the committee to the same effect, and an interview was had with the parliamentary agent of the Liverpool corporation to see if some compromise could not be arrived at. Owing mainly to the fact that the property owners in Liverpool, directly affected by these sections had not lodged any objections, it was found impossible to get them struck out, and the Bill was ultimately read a third time in its original form.

Glasgow Corporation Loans Bill. [House of Lords]. The committee were requested by the Glasgow Landlords' Associa-

tion shortly after the second reading of this Bill to obtain the excision of section 18, by which one-half of the incidence of a supplemental rate for raising a corporation guarantee fund upon the security of the leading city trusts is to be transferred from the occupiers to the owners of property. Accordingly, a deputation from the committee had an interview with the parliamentary agent of the Glasgow corporation, at which were present the town clerk of Glasgow and other members of the corporation. It was there agreed that the Glasgow Landlords' Association should confer with the Glasgow corporation in Glasgow about it, to see if some arrangement could be made in the matter; and the Glasgow Landlord's Association was informed of this proposal. The secretary of the League subsequently had an interview with Lord Redesdale's counsel, before whose committee the Bill was to come. It was there suggested that the chairman of the parliamentary committee should communicate with Lord Redesdale, and lay before him a statement of objections. This was done, and the committee received a notice from Lord Redesdale's counsel that he had instructed the agents of the Glasgow corporation to prepare a statement of the present incidence of taxation in that city, before the Bill could be proceeded with, which decision was communicated to the Glasgow Landlords' Association.

Parochial Boards (Scotland) Bill. [House of Commons.] The essence of this Bill was the infringement by its provisions of the principle that taxation should be proportionate to representation. On behalf of the Glasgow Landlords' Association, who, in the person of their president and two members of council, waited on the committee in reference to the matter, a printed statement of objections with a "whip" was sent from the office of the League to all Scotch members, requesting their opposition to the second reading. On April 18th the Bill passed the second reading by the small majority of four in a House of 210.

Tithe Rent Charge Bill. [House of Lords.] This Bill proposed to make the landowner liable for the tithe as a common debt, *any*

contract between him and the tenant to the contrary notwithstanding. The committee deemed the Bill objectionable in principle, and unworkable in practice. The second reading of the Bill was moved in the House of Lords, May 31st, when it was opposed by Lord Bramwell and summarily withdrawn.

MINES.

Employers' Liability Act (1880) Amendment Bill. [House of Commons.] (See "Overlegislation in 1883," page 3). In anticipation of the second reading of this Bill, communications were sent out in several quarters, and more especially to the secretaries of various miners' unions, with a view of ascertaining the feeling of the working classes towards this Bill. In response to this, the committee received numerous requests from the miners at many of the largest collieries in Durham and Northumberland, to send down representatives to address a series of meetings of the men on this subject. Accordingly this was done, and during the first three weeks of May meetings were held at many of the collieries in Northumberland, amongst which were the two largest in the county. At these places resolutions condemning the Bill were proposed by the miners themselves and carried by three-fourths majorities. As a means of still further spreading a correct idea of the probable effect of the Bill if it became law, 10,000 copies of a pamphlet on the Amendment Bill by Mr. J. Pringle were printed and distributed by the League among the miners in Durham and Northumberland, and in the other coal districts of the country, the greater portion of these pamphlets having been specially applied for by the miners themselves and the secretaries of their unions. Mr. Pringle (himself a working miner in Northumberland until the last two years), in conjunction with Mr. John Bryson, miner, of Bebside Colliery, in the same county, represented the League at these meetings in Northumberland. In face of the hostile feeling against the Bill thus disclosed, Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P., who had charge of it, deemed it necessary to make a special defence of his position in regard to

the measure before the annual meeting of the delegates of the Northumberland Miners' Union, held at Newcastle a fortnight after the representatives of the League had arrived in Northumberland. That the views, however, of Mr. Burt and those of the delegates that supported him were not in agreement with those of the miners themselves was shown by the fact that petitions against the Bill, forwarded from various collieries to the secretary of the League, contained, among others, the signatures of 1,219 working miners, who were all voters in Mr. Burt's own constituency of the borough of Morpeth. These petitions, together with others from the miners of five of the largest collieries in Staffordshire, were presented by Mr. M'Culloch Torrens, M.P., the day before the second reading. Previous to that date a statement of objections against the Bill was drawn up, of which the following is an extract, and which, together with a special "whip," was sent to all members of the House of Commons:—

"A judge of the High Court of Justice writing in 1880, before the passing of the present Employers' Liability Act, said, in reference to it:—'I suppose it is not intended to forbid master and servant contracting themselves out of the law That would be a most mischievous interference with the freedom of contract. . . . I cannot suppose anything so outrageous.'"

This it is which this Amendment Bill now proposes to do, by enacting that the provisions of the existing Act shall be enforced in every case, *notwithstanding any contract or agreement to the contrary*. The proposed change does not affect employers. They have already defeated the attempt made by the existing Act to saddle them with more responsibility than their own common sense and good feeling spontaneously impose on them, by the establishment of such systems of mutual insurance as Employers' Liability Assurance Companies. Unless it is proposed to go to the extent of making such insurance illegal, the Bill cannot increase the responsibility of employers. The Bill is one which solely concerns the working classes. Its acceptance or rejection ought to be decided entirely with reference to their welfare. The pro-

moters of the Bill have all along cited the miners as being, from the dangerous nature of their calling, especially interested in the measure. What, then, is the opinion of the *working miners* as distinguished from that of the *delegates*? Take the county of Northumberland, from which the Bill originates. The opinion of the miners there, in their entirety, has never been sought for or obtained by the promoters of the Bill. As a body they have in nearly every colliery *voluntarily* contracted themselves out of the existing Act. At meetings of working miners held in May last at Cambois Colliery and Ashington Colliery, the two largest in the county, resolutions condemning the Bill were carried by majorities of 4 to 1 and 5 to 1 respectively. At Ashington Colliery the resolution was worded as follows by the men themselves, and the one at Cambois Colliery was to the same effect:—"That we, the men of Ashington Colliery, are determined to hold fast by the privileges which we now enjoy, and which were won by the persistent and determined efforts of our fathers and ourselves, rather than trust to the uncertain and ruinous operations of the law." Referring to the petitions the statement continued:—"Your petitioners declare that in the mining industry there are many in which it is more to the advantage of the employed to have, as at present, special agreements or understandings with their employers for certain compensation in all cases of accident, than to be compelled to rely in some cases only on the provisions of the Employers' Liability Act, with all the uncertainty and vexation of a lawsuit. Your petitioners further humbly submit that the Bill, if passed, will establish a precedent whereby their freedom as a class to make their own contracts may be endangered in other cases; that besides this, and the previous objection, it is most undesirable to make a law which, whatever else it will do, will tempt people to break their word by putting a premium on breaches of contract and solemn promises that will bind the honest but not the fraudulent." The statement concluded with urging the fact that "The miners of Durham and Northumberland have by years of careful organisa-

tion, established for themselves a Miners' Permanent Relief Fund, to which employers voluntarily pay twenty-five per cent. on the contributions subscribed by the men. If the freedom to contract out of the Act is taken away, the employers will be compelled, as the miners themselves admit, to withdraw their percentage of subscriptions. It is unreasonable to suppose that an employer will voluntarily pay for insuring his men against accident, if *notwithstanding any agreement to the contrary*, he may in addition be liable to actions for damages. It is respectfully submitted that no change in the existing law ought to be made until the opinion of the working classes as a body has been more widely taken on the subject." Copies of the statement of objections were forwarded to all the principal London and provincial papers, and communications in reference to the Bill were sent to the President of the Mining Association of Great Britain, of the Cotton Spinners' Association, and of the Iron Trades Employers' Association. Three days before the second reading of the Bill, Mr. Bryson and Mr. Pringle attended the Annual General Meeting of the League at Willis's Rooms, and stated the objections of the north-country miners to the Bill. Mr. Thomas Lunt, secretary of the North Staffordshire Coal and Ironstone Workers' Permanent Relief Society, in speaking at the meeting against the Bill said that if time had permitted he could have procured more than 4,000 signatures to a petition against the Bill from the miners of his own district alone. Mr. Burt had been invited to attend the meeting for the purpose of explaining an unjustifiable statement recently made by him in public, namely, that the League was using "every effort, fair and foul," to induce the miners to oppose the Bill. Mr. Burt, however, in a letter to the chairman of the League declining to be present, admitted that "the word 'foul' is rather too strong to apply to the means used by the representatives of the League to induce the miners to oppose the Employers' Liability Amendment Bill." Sir Joseph Pease, M.P., had given notice of moving the rejection of the Bill on the second reading. At his request the secretary of the League supplied

him with additional materials for more effectually opposing the measure, and placed Mr. Bryson and Mr. Pringle in communication with him. Mr. Bryson and Mr. Pringle, together with Mr. Lunt, were present in the lobby to furnish information to Sir Joseph Pease and the opponents of the Bill during the debate on the second reading. This took place on June 13, when, after Mr. Burt and Mr. Broadhurst had spoken in support of the measure and in condemnation of the opposition organised by the Liberty and Property Defence League, the Bill was thrown out by a majority of 111.

Writing subsequently from Bebside Colliery to the secretary of the League on the result of the division, Mr. Bryson said :—
“Those who look carefully into the matter will be least inclined to doubt that the defeat of Mr. Burt’s Bill was entirely due to the action which the League took in issuing petitions and in otherwise awakening public attention to its mischievous tendency. Had this not been done it would have gone forth that a few trades union agents were representing the undivided opinion of the working people of the country in favour of the Bill. Thus its chance of success would have been very considerably increased. I have for some years and without assistance been opposing this class of legislation on account of its enervating character, destroying as it does the individuality and self-reliant qualities of the people. But then my influence was not felt beyond the range of my own neighbourhood. I say, therefore, it is due to the action of the League that this injurious Bill to working men has been set aside for a time, at least.” Mr. Bryson is right. The proposal of course would be injurious to working men. Mr. Burt thought he was binding and restraining only the cruel employer, forgetting, that as two are necessary to every contract, the employer could not contract himself out of the Act unless the employed wished it; and so the Bill would restrain the employed.

MANUFACTURES.

Factories and Workshops Amendment Bill. [House of Lords]. The object of this Bill was to place under more rigid official regulation than heretofore all white-lead factories and bakehouses. As regards the former, the main objection of the committee to the Bill was that it extended for the first time to adult male labour, the coercive principle of the Factory Acts hitherto applicable only to that of women and children. By clause 7 the Bill proposed to subject on summary conviction to a fine of £2 *any adult male* in a white-lead factory who refuses or neglects to use any gloves, boots, clothing, respirator, or other appliances, or omits to drink the salts or acidulated or other liquid to be provided by the employers in accordance with the provisions of the Bill or special rules sanctioned by the Home Department. Replies received by the secretary in answer to communications addressed to leading firms at Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield showed that in analogous cases of trades conducted at some risk to health, such as file-grinding, the sorting of skin-wool and alpaca and the wet spinning of flax, it had always been found impossible to prevail upon the workpeople to systematically avail themselves of similar precautions voluntarily offered them by the employers. As regards the portion relating to bakehouses, one objection was that by clause 15 of the Bill it will be impossible in the future to establish a bakery, no matter how airy, convenient and well-ventilated, unless one-half of it be above the ground level. It was decided that nothing more should be attempted on the second reading than to make a protest against the principle of the measure, which was done by the chairman of the committee and Earl Fortescue. Amendments to clauses 7 and 15, proposing to remove the ground of the above objections, were drawn up by the committee and placed in the hands of the chairman and the Earl of Pembroke, and a "whip" was sent to all members of the House of Lords stating the main objections to the Bill and asking their support to the amendments. These were moved by Lord Wemyss and Lord Pembroke respectively on the

third reading, July 23rd, but on divisions, owing to the opposition of the Government and in spite of the support of other members of the League, they were negatived by small majorities, and the Bill ultimately in the House of Commons was read a second time, went through committee, was read a third time, and passed in a single afternoon (August 23rd) without any discussion the day but one before the prorogation of parliament. Previous, however, to the Bill receiving the royal assent the force of Lord Pembroke's proposed amendment was recognized by the Government, and the objectionable portion of clause 15 was accordingly withdrawn.

MISCELLANEOUS TRADES, &c.

Pawnbrokers' Bill. [House of Lords.] This Bill proposed to place the trade of pawnbroking under a stricter and more minute system of regulations than that to which it is now subjected, under the idea that the labours of the police in tracing stolen property would thereby be materially lightened. Even from this point of view the uncalled for character of the measure ought to have been manifest, when it was recollected that out of all the articles that pass through the hands of the pawnbrokers, the number discovered, either in their shops or at the public sales, to be stolen is wonderfully small. The Bill, at the instigation of the officials of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, was introduced by the Government, without any notice to the trade, into the Upper House on June 5th. It seemed to the committee that one chief effect of the measure would be to render the working of the trade more costly; and that as the prime function of the pawnbroker was that of "Poor Man's Banker," it would be highly detrimental to subordinate the interests of the trade, and of its customers, to the convenience of the police. In consequence of a communication which the committee received from Mr. Alfred Hardaker, the honorary secretary of the Pawnbrokers' National Defence Association, complaining of the sudden introduction of the Bill, the chairman of the parliamentary committee

obtained through the Lord Chancellor a postponement of the second reading. The committee, in conjunction with Mr. J. Ashbridge Telfer of the Pawnbrokers' National Defence Association, and Mr. J. Attenborough, their solicitor, drew up a series of amendments to the Bill, having decided that this would be more effective than opposing the measure in block. These amendments having received the approval of the Pawnbroker's National Defence Association were entrusted by the committee to the charge of Earl Fortescue, the Earl of Wemyss, the Earl of Pembroke, and Lord Henniker, by whom they were moved in the House of Lords when the Bill was in committee on July 3. In this manner, although the Bill was ultimately read a third time, many essential modifications of it were secured in accordance with the views of the trade.

[House of Commons.] On the appearance of the Bill in the House of Commons, it was found that it had in the meantime been so much altered by the promoters that the effect of the amendments secured in the Upper House were almost obliterated, and that the measure practically again contained all its original defects. The committee, therefore, in conjunction with the Pawnbrokers' Defence Association, renewed their opposition to the Bill, and Mr. Warton, at the request of the committee, took steps to block it. It was decided to draw up and send a "whip" to all League members in the House of Commons asking for their opposition to the measure on the second reading. The Bill, however, was withdrawn before that stage was reached on August 6, Mr. Hibbert, Under-Secretary of the Home Department, who had charge of the measure, complaining of the persistent opposition which had rendered this course necessary. *The Stolen Goods Bill*, which, to a large extent, was in a similar way aimed against the pawnbroking trade, and which had been concurrently opposed during its passage through both Houses, was later on also withdrawn.

Return of Inspectors under Public Acts. [House of Lords.] In accordance with a resolution passed by the committee, the

chairman moved in the House of Lords, on August 17, for a return of inspectors under all public Acts, giving their total number, the number employed under each Act, their qualifications, duties, and salaries, together with their retiring allowances and political disabilities, if any. The object of moving for the return was, among other things, to enable a comparison to be made between the proportion of benefit derived from a yearly increasing system of Government inspection, and the cost to the country of its maintenance. The motion was supported by Earl Fortescue, and agreed to.

LIQUOR.

Payment of Wages in Public-Houses Prohibition Bill. [House of Lords.] (See "Overlegislation in 1883," page 10.) Statistics bearing upon this question were obtained by the committee from all trustworthy sources, and embodied in a printed statement of objections, from which the following is an extract :—"This Bill proposes to prevent workmen from receiving their wages in public-houses, or under the shelter of any buildings on land belonging thereto. The practice which the Bill seeks to stop prevails to some extent in the suburbs of London, and in the provinces among (i) railway and other contractors employing navvy labour, and (ii) builders, when conducting their work at distances from their central yards ; and to a greater extent in the east of London and seaports generally among (iii) the foremen of dock labourers engaged in loading and unloading vessels. Though the number of those in such trades who will be affected by this Bill is relatively small in any one locality, the aggregate of them throughout the country is considerable. The Bill will inflict great inconvenience upon the masters, and far greater hardship upon the workmen in these moving trades. The practice has grown up, partly because in such cases the nearest public-house is generally the only place where small change can be procured, and mainly because nowhere else can be found sufficiently commodious shelter for the men to rest in while their time-sheets

and wages are being made out by the contractor and his foreman. This process, which in open-air callings cannot be commenced before the men have ceased work and the foreman is liberated from his duties of supervision, is one occupying considerable time. If this Bill succeeds in depriving these shifting trades of the cheap temporary business premises which in each fresh spot the public-house now affords them, the contractor and his foreman will be driven in all cases, as they now are perforce in some, to make up their accounts in a moveable clerk-of-works office a few feet square, while the men wait outside exposed to all kinds of weather. The dock-labourers are, as a rule, men of no substance, and cannot afford to build pay-offices of their own. If, therefore, their foremen or "gangers" are precluded from paying them in the public-house, in nine cases out of ten they will have no alternative but to transact their business in the open. Outside such migratory trades, to whom continued absence from their central yards, or the want of any office at all renders the practice a necessity, there are none in which the payment of wages in public-houses is habitual. The section in the Mines Regulation Act, 1872, dealing in a similar way with this question is no precedent, as the trade affected by that Act is not a moving one, and every colliery possesses adequate offices of its own. In the opinion of many practical miners there never was any general need in the coal districts for this section, which on this account has been completely inoperative. If the majority of workmen in these trades desire this measure, it is reasonable to suppose that the already existing amalgamated Labourers' Union would have said as much. If they have been compelled to remain silent because of any incompleteness in their organisation, it is to be feared that this unsolicited "protection" by the legislature will tend to retard the development of a combination among them likely to be useful to their class in many other directions. So far from embodying the wishes of those whose interest it proposes to consult, this Bill seems but another instance of that kind of legislation which aims at forcibly attempt-

ing to protect the working classes against themselves, without considering the way in which this treatment will necessarily react upon their self-reliance. On these grounds it appears most undesirable to uproot a custom of proved utility, which has grown up in certain special trades in response to practical needs, in deference to an agitation based not upon observed facts, but upon a sentiment in itself no doubt excellent."

Copies were forwarded to all members of the House of Lords, and to all the chief London and provincial papers. A special "whip" was also sent to all members of the League in the Upper House, and to other peers, who were thought likely to object to the principle of the Bill, inviting their opposition to it. The Bill came on for second reading on March 6th, and was supported by the Earl of Shaftesbury, who made a speech in its favour, in which he stated that "the hostility shown to the Bill was due to the instigation of a new society called 'the Liberty and Property Defence League.'" Lord Bramwell moved its rejection. This motion was, however, lost by a majority of 38 in a house of 78. There is little doubt that the promoters of the Bill owed their success to the fact that the Government threw its weight into the scales in favour of the second reading. Equally certain it is that had it not been for the opposition organised by the League, this Bill, containing so mischievous a principle, would have passed as it did last year through the House of Lords without a protest.

In anticipation of the Bill's appearance in the House of Commons, a statement of objections and statistics, similar to the one sent to members of the Upper House, was forwarded to all members of the House of Commons, together with a special "whip" to the League members in the House, and to the other members known to be unfavourable to this class of measures. The Bill was read a second time at two in the morning of the first sitting after the Easter recess, in spite of protests from the members who had given notice of opposition, against the unfair advantages accorded to the supporters of the Bill by this un-

seemly haste.

In both the above instances letters were sent to the secretaries of all the societies in co-operation with the League, to instruct members of Parliament with whom they have influence to lend assistance in opposing the measure in all its stages.

Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (No. 2) Bill. [House of Commons.] (See Overlegislation in 1883, page 13).—Previous to the second reading of this Bill, the following printed statement of objections, embodying statistics collected from the best sources, was sent to every member of the House of Commons, and to the London and provincial press:—"This Bill proposes to close every hotel and public-house in every part of England during the whole of every Sunday. The inconvenience to which all temperate people, who form an overwhelming majority in this country, will be put by this measure is inconceivable, and this on a day which to nine-tenths of them is their only period of relaxation during the week. This sacrifice is demanded for the supposed purpose of protecting from inducements to excessive drinking a relatively small section of the population, which in every generation is decreasing, and must inevitably continue to decrease under the pressure of public opinion and other social causes. This measure will inflict a great injustice upon those engaged in the licensed victualling trade, who in most cases have invested their capital in it on calculations based upon the continued possession of a seven-day's license. As the State is solely and primarily responsible for the creation of the restrictions under which this trade is compelled to conduct its business, it seems most unfair to disappoint the reasonable expectations of those who entered it and tacitly submitted to work it on those conditions, by depriving them at one stroke of what will in most instances amount to more than one-seventh of their income. This measure is one of a class which rests on the assumption, again and again disproved, that moral defects can be eradicated or even partially amended by an Act of Parliament; and upon the want of recognition or ignorance of the fact, that wherever the State

attempts this task, it either directly increases the evil, or forces it to reappear in another spot in a new form. The result of the hitherto isolated attempts of the State to deal in this manner with intemperance on one day in every seven, by the total Sunday closing of public-houses, proves the truth of these conclusions. At the Irish Assizes in March of this year four Irish judges made the following statements to grand juries : At Ennis, Lord Justice Fitzgibbon said the cases of intemperance in County Clare had risen from 960 to 1,511. At Nenagh, Baron Dowse said drunkenness had increased in the North Riding of Tipperary from 512 to 1,037 cases, a little over 100 per cent. At Limerick, Judge O'Brien said that intemperance had doubled in that county. At Cavan, Judge Harrison informed the grand jury that drunkenness had trebled in their county. In all these counties the Irish Sunday Closing Act is in force. In Wales (according to statistics derived from the head constable's office in Cardiff), convictions for drunkenness on Sunday in that town have increased 50 per cent. since the Welsh Sunday Closing Act has been in operation. In Scotland, where the Forbes-Mackenzie Sunday Closing Act has long been in force, it appears, from a parliamentary return issued in January of this year, that during the last four years convictions for drunkenness on Sunday have been steadily increasing from 1,886 in 1879, to 2,530 in 1882. In spite, therefore, of the strict enforcement of the law on licensed houses in all districts subject to Sunday Closing Acts, it would appear from the above and other evidence, that the facilities for drinking on that day still exist there for those that seek them. On the authority of the police themselves in Glasgow, and in other large centres of Scotland, it is notorious, that notwithstanding all their exertions, the law has throughout been persistently defied by a yearly increasing number of unlicensed drinking-rooms, called ' shebeens '—secret, and therefore badly conducted places, with no character nor stock-in-trade but a few barrels of liquor to lose—which, on being suppressed in one part immediately spring up again in another. Admitting, even in face of universal failure, past and

present, that in the future the State might possibly succeed in completely stopping the sale of intoxicating liquors on Sunday, it is very certain that the withdrawal of the occasion for its exercise would not tend to develop the self-control of the population in regard to drink, any more than continence in general could be fostered by continually keeping everyone under lock and key. If the right of a bare majority to regulate the habits of the population in the matter of drink is admitted, there is, logically, nothing to be said against the conduct of citizens being placed under State control in every detail of life. Where the guidance of a principle is not admitted, and the decision is left to the notions of expediency existing in the minds of the majority for the time being, there is great danger that this concession of Sunday closing will be used as a precedent for mischievous restrictions of individual liberty in other directions." A special "whip" to the League members in the House was also issued. The second reading was fixed for May 22nd, when the House was counted out, and ultimately the Bill was withdrawn.

Sale of Intoxicating Liquor on Sunday (Cornwall) Bill. [House of Lords.] (See "Overlegislation in 1883," page 13.) This Bill proposed to close every hotel, public house, and place where fermented liquor is sold, in every part of Cornwall during the whole of every Sunday. Having been withdrawn from the House of Commons on July 10, it was on the same day introduced into the House of Lords. Owing to the suddenness of this manœuvre on the part of the promoters of the measure, it was not found possible to effectually oppose the Bill on the second reading; and accordingly the chairman of the committee confined himself on that occasion to entering a protest in general terms against the piece-meal introduction of the retrograde principle of local option contained in the Bill. At the request of the committee, however, Lord Wemyss gave notice of a motion for the rejection of the Bill on the third reading. Mr. Ernest W. Norfolk, secretary and parliamentary agent of the Licensed Victuallers' Protection Society, and Mr. George Candelet, par-

liamentary agent of the Licensed Victuallers' National Defence League, were communicated with, with a view to the co-operation of their respective societies with the League in resisting the Bill; and a "whip" was issued to all members of the League in the Upper House, and to other peers known to be opposed to this class of measures, requesting their support to Lord Wemyss's motion, and pointing out that apart from the unsoundness of this kind of legislation, the separate application of it to special districts was contrary to the principle that a law should be universal and uniform in its incidence. As proof of the needlessness of the measure in this particular case it was shown in the "whip" that in the two years, 1880-81, as given by parliamentary returns, there was an average decrease of 33 per cent. in convictions of persons arrested for drunkenness on Sunday in the county of Cornwall, as compared with the three years preceding 1880. The Bill was set down for third reading on July 30th, when on a division the motion of Lord Wemyss was carried, and the Bill was thrown out.

AMUSEMENTS.

Theatres Regulation Bill. [House of Commons.] (See "Over-legislation in 1883," page 19). The object of this Bill was to subject all places of amusement to stricter regulations and to a more minute system of inspection directed by a bureau in the Home Department. A letter was sent to the Music Hall Proprietors' Protection Association in February last, pointing out the retrograde character of the Bill, and urging the initiation of some measure of a less centralising tendency. A reply of thanks was received for the suggestion, but it was not found possible by the theatrical profession to take any action in the desired direction before the second reading of the Bill came on. This occurred on May 9, when it was opposed and thrown out by a large majority.

EDUCATION.

Education (Ireland) Extension of the English System of State-

Supported Training Colleges. [House of Lords.] In view of the proposed extension to Ireland of State subventioned and supervised training colleges, whereby in England the supply of elementary teachers moulded according to State pattern has been abnormally stimulated, and voluntary experiments in the art of teaching have been discouraged, Earl Fortescue moved in the House of Lords on July 16, that such extension was inexpedient. The motion, however, after a long debate, was negatived. Lord Fortescue's speech was subsequently printed in pamphlet form, and 200 copies of it were distributed by the League among the members of the Association of Principals of Private schools, and the head-masters of the principal grammar schools throughout the country.

LABOUR.

Trades Union Congress, Nottingham. A preliminary notice had been issued by the Trades Union Parliamentary Committee, in which it was stated that the past legislative action of the League would occupy the attention of the congress, and in which it was implied that the objects and constitution of the League would be hostilely criticised. A request from the committee to the Trades Union Parliamentary Committee to permit a deputation from the League to wait upon the congress, in self defence, and in order to correct the misapprehensions as to the objects and motives of the League which seemed to exist in some quarters, was refused on technical grounds by the Trades Union Parliamentary Committee, through their secretary, Mr. Henry Broadhurst, M.P. At recent congresses a marked tendency had been shown to pervert trades unions from their original use as self-help associations for directly strengthening the position of the working classes in dealing with their employers, into instruments for setting in motion, by means of legislation, a system of industrial regulations administered by State departments. It was foreseen that such a course as this, in the long run, must cripple private enterprise in face of foreign competition, destroy originality in commercial life, and undermine the self-dependent and progressive qualities of the

working classes. The true function of trades unions, it is contended by the League, is not to aim (and aim in vain) at indirectly securing the regulation of industry in accordance with the just interests and safety of the working classes by the aid of state officials and inspectors, as middle-men, but to effect this by bringing the influence of the union to bear, where necessary, directly on the employer in the first instance. This contention has been illustrated by a passage in a pamphlet written by Mr. J. Pringle, lately a working miner at Barrington Colliery, Northumberland, and published by the League. Alluding especially to his own industry, he says, addressing his fellow-miners:—"If there is more loss of life in your pits and workings than there ought to be, you have the remedy in your own hands. You have already shown yourselves strong enough through your trades unions to obtain rights and concessions from your employers, where they were justly due to you. Cannot you use these same unions in the same way to compel your employers to make your work safer, if you think they do not already do all they can or know of for you in the pits? Through your unions hold arbitrations with your employers about these matters; and if you find they are unwilling (which I feel sure they will not be) to do their best to protect your lives and limbs in the workings, and to make just agreements with you, then strike for yourselves. You have, through the power of your unions, the remedy in your own hands. None know better than you and your employers the practical working of mines, and the agreements that suit you best—you, who live your whole lives in them, and earn your bread from them. Do not, then, trust the guardianship of your lives and limbs and the regulation of your agreements with your employers to the hands of a State department, whose officials and inspectors, coming from we know not where, cannot know the needs and dangers of your own pits and workings as well as you and your employers do. If you do, you will lose the habit of taking care of yourselves, and learn to put your trust in Government officials, who only begin to think of

you after they have looked to themselves and their salaries first.” The committee regretting the loss of this opportunity of personally defending the past action of the League, and of advancing this view of the general question of trades unionism before the congress itself, requested Mr. Wordsworth Donisthorpe to draw up an address on the subject for circulation among the delegates and others present at Nottingham during the congress. The following extract from it will show the line adopted :—“The coming struggle will be between Individualism on the one hand, and Socialism on the other; and the League has been formed for the purpose of saying what there is to be said for the time-honoured plan of letting folks alone to work out there own salvation, without in the least impugning the sincerity and earnest philanthropy of those who, in recent years, have framed legislative measures which may fairly be stigmatised as ‘grandmotherly.’ Many of you possibly have lived to see the indirect evil resulting from well-intentioned laws which you yourselves may have had a hand in promoting. The sense of dependence and reliance on a paternal legislature is in itself emasculating; and no one who reads history aright can doubt that the greatness of the Anglo-Saxon race has been built up on the broad basis of liberty and self-help. Witness the unrivalled colonising power of our people; and contrast it with the hopeless breakdown of other races who have attempted to compete with us—races which have been nurtured under the effeminating system of the State pap-bottle and leading-strings. Let us then stick to the weapon which in the fight for life has never yet broken in our hands, and look forward with faith to the future. . . . In one respect I think your patience exceeds your judgment. You continue year after year and generation after generation to believe and accept the abounding promises first of one party and then of the other, despite the invariable outcome, when the inevitable day of reckoning arrives. To-morrow is always the day when every man is to have his fowl in the pot, and to-morrow never comes. When the cupboard is opened, as at last it needs

must be, it is found to be bare—not even a bone in it. Why, last parliament the Tories were going to build every artisan in England a beautiful dwelling for next to no rent. Who has got them? This parliament, the Liberals made some very tempting promises; they were by no means stinting in bait; well they caught their fish and it did them credit, I admit. They were very clever, but what is the result? Æsop once wrote a fable about a mountain in labour; all the simple folk gathered round to witness the outcome of such portentous rumblings, when at last out popped a ridiculous mouse. I think the old prophet must have had in his eye the present British Parliament and the Agricultural Holdings Act! Seriously, what in the name of honesty have either party in the State ever done for *you*? They have patted you on the back, especially those of you who have votes to give; they have bragged one against the other, and blustered and promised; but have they ever fulfilled? If so, when and how? True, during the last half-century of legislation they have given you half-a-dozen little measures; but every one of them had been passed before in one part of the country or another by yourselves, by combinations of workmen standing shoulder to shoulder and demanding from your employers what was right and reasonable. Those of you who come from the north will bear me out: was the Truck Act required in Durham? Was the Employers' Liability Act wanted in Northumberland? And answer me this question: have they done any good in those places where they were not already the local law and custom by virtue of the resolution of the men themselves? Friends, continue to make your own laws. And let me impress upon you what is the true attitude of the Liberty League towards recent legislation. So far from depreciating the beneficent and humane provisions of the Factory Acts, Mines Acts, Shipping Acts, Truck Acts, and the like, the League would gladly see them extended and strengthened, not by a slavish appeal to State aid, but by union and combination of workmen themselves; and by voluntary arrangement between employers on the one hand and an inde-

pendent and outspoken body of workpeople, demanding what is just and right, on the other."

Acting on the instructions of the committee, the secretary, accompanied by Mr. M. J. Lyons, went to Nottingham on the day of the opening of the congress (Sept. 10), to superintend the distribution of these addresses and other publications of the League, and to arrange, if possible, for holding some informal meetings among the delegates outside the congress. They were there joined by Mr. Donisthorpe. Two thousand of the addresses to trade unionists, and a like number of other League publications were distributed at the doors of the congress and at the numerous other public meetings in connection with the congress held in the town during the week. The technical grounds which, as stated above, excluded a deputation of the League from appearing before the congress, did not exclude Mr. Frederick Harrison. That gentleman made a speech attacking the League, which must have been dictated by a desire to please his audience. Said he, "Why do they not go in for a repeal of all Factory Acts, and go against compulsory vaccination, against the Government monopoly of the Post-office," &c. If the League deputation had been admitted, it would have told Mr. Harrison and the congress that the League, as we have said, approve of protecting the helpless, approve of preventing men from poisoning their fellow-creatures, and that where legislation has gone beyond this the League would undo it if it could; but has enough to do in preventing further mischief. But this would be no news to Mr. Harrison, who knows perfectly well that what he was uttering was fallacious. And here we may notice another unfounded charge against the League made by the *Scotsman* newspaper. It charged the League with supporting legislation for the benefit of the rich. Being challenged to prove this, it referred to the Agricultural Holdings Bill and two or three other measures. As to the "two or three other measures" we may dismiss them with this remark, that if there was any pretence for saying they existed, the *Scotsman* would have mentioned them. As to the Agricultural Holdings

Bill the writer could not know what he was talking about. That Bill was, and the Act is, a disablement of the tenant as much as of the landlord. The informal and friendly meetings which it had been proposed to hold had to be abandoned owing to the private invitations which the secretary of the League addressed to the delegates having been intercepted by the standing orders committee. A public meeting, however, was held by the League in the Mechanics' Hall on September 14, the evening before the congress terminated, which was very numerously attended by delegates and the townsfolk generally. Mr. M. J. Lyons spoke on the question of socialism and individualism, and explained the objects and principles of the League, being followed and supported by Alderman Worth, of Nottingham, Mr. Wordsworth Donisthorpe, the secretary of the League and others. The previous evening, Mr. Donisthorpe, Mr. Lyons, and the secretary, were present at a meeting convened by the Democratic Federation on the "nationalisation" of the land, at which Mr. H. M. Hyndman, the president, advocated the confiscation of the land by the community without any compensation to the present owners. Had not a resolution been drawn up and proposed on the platform by the representatives of the League, there was every appearance that this open incitement to plunder would have passed without a protest and unchallenged.

Labourers (Ireland) Bill. [House of Lords.] This Bill proposed to empower the rural sanitary authorities of any district in Ireland, on the representation of twelve ratepayers, to build labourers' cottages with gardens attached, out of the rates upon land similarly purchased by compulsory sale: and to extend the Artisans' Dwellings Act, 1875, to urban districts. It is worthy of note that this Bill, having government support, is a piece of State-socialism singled out for special reprobation by Mr. Fawcett in his manual of Political Economy. The committee held that the Bill, in addition to practically enlarging the scope of the existing Poor Law, possessed the further defect of opening wider the door to jobbery and corruption among local

authorities. It, moreover, introduces into towns in Ireland the principle of the State supervision of the housing of the working classes, which fifteen years of Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Acts and Amendment Acts in England, has, according to the report of the select committee last year, proved to have been attended with nothing but harm for those whom it was meant to benefit. Side by side with the absolute and inevitable failure of the State to grapple with this evil, as thus disclosed by official evidence, the committee noted the comparative success in this direction of the yearly increasing number of "Industrial Dwellings Companies," originated by private enterprise, and conducted on a commercial basis. From this quarter they concluded must eventually come whatever mitigation of the evil the conditions of social existence and progress admit of. On these grounds, and as affording a dangerous precedent, Earl Fortescue and the chairman protested against the socialistic and fruitless principle of the Bill on the second reading (August 17): while in committee Lord Fortescue unsuccessfully moved the postponement of the measure; which was shortly after read a third time, and passed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Municipal Corporations (Borough Funds) Bill. [House of Commons.] The object of this Bill was to enable municipal corporations to incur expenses in promoting Bills in Parliament without the previous sanction of the owners and ratepayers; a course of action which is at present provided against by section 4 of the Borough Funds Act, 1872. The committee considered that this measure was calculated to give fresh impetus to the increasing tendency of local Governments, in imitation of the example set in higher quarters, to exceed their normal functions by taking upon themselves the business of traders or regulators of trade within their respective districts. Accordingly the Marquis of Stafford, M.P., on behalf of the League, presented a petition against the Bill from the parliamentary committee, accompanied by thirteen others forwarded to the secretary of the League for presentation,

